

Growing Herbs

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Herb or `erb?

- Controversy
- Comes from Latin herba.
- Oxford dictionary h was pronounced.
- Dropped in late Latin and romance languages.
- English picked it back up again.
- Americans dropped the H.
- Doesn't matter! Either is correct.



What is an Herb?

- An herbaceous plant that displays one or more of the following characteristics:
 - Grown for food.
 - Used for fragrance or decoration.
 - To dye plants.
 - Medicinally.
-
- Any plant cultivated or harvested for an interesting or unusual quality.



Why Grow Herbs

- Look and smell the same as they did ages ago.
- Much allure is antiquity.
- Comfort in the old things.
- Sensory experience.
- Visual appeal.
- Fragrances and flavors are pleasurable.
- Yields textures and sounds.
- Outgrowth of fascination with good food and how to prepare.
- Desire to decorate and scent home.
- Wish to dye plants.
- To heal common ailments.



Herbs in Eastern Virginia

- Challenging!
- Wide fluctuations in temperature. 70's to 20's at night.
- Winter months- with ice and winds- harsh.
- Summer rains and humidity. Need to treat some as annuals.



Growing Herbs

- Mediterranean area.
- Rocky soil – hot dry conditions.
- Tolerate total neglect.
- Can grow here despite high humidity.
- Planted after last frost date in spring.



Location

- Full sun-4-5 hours a day.
- Water drains well in area.
No standing water.
- One requirement for all herbs- good drainage.
- Herbs DO NOT like wet feet.
- Raised beds are a good solution.
- Allow plenty of space for herbs mature size.



Soil

- Good preparation is vital.
- Prepare the area thoroughly.
- Soil test.
- pH of 6.3-7.0.
- Dig soil to a depth of 12”.
- Eastern Exposure
- Incorporate lime, coarse builder’s sand, aged manure, peat moss and compost.



Planting

- Lift plant out of pot, spread out roots before putting in the ground.
- Place plant into soil.
- Cover well and water until water no longer drains.
- Add a little compost or organic fertilizer. fish emulsion Mulch plants.
- Don't over crowd plants.



Watering

- Unnecessary if regular rains.
- Drought- or extremely hot temperatures- water every 4-5 days.
- Do not over water!
- Susceptible to root rot.



Fertilizing

- Do not need much.
- If soil is not good quality, may need to fertilize or add compost.
- Slow release fertilizer



Mulching

- Very important to hold in moisture in the summer.
- Protects herbs from temp. fluctuations in winter.
- Grass clippings- pine straw.
- Sand or gravel for gray leafed herbs.
- Heat radiating up from sand keep underside of the plant hot and dry.



Pruning

- Pinch, prune and harvest.
- Meant to be used.
- Keep flowers pinched off.
- Keeps herbs healthy and bush.
- Don't prune more than 1/3 of herb a year.
- Use pinched herbs in crafts and cooking.



Insects

- Rarely seen on outdoor plants.
- Spittlebugs on Rosemary.
- Use strong spray of water.
- Insecticidal soap.



Growing Herbs in Containers

- More maintenance than in the ground.
- Just as satisfying.
- Can come in in the winter.



Basic Requirements

- Containers- deep enough for plant roots and have drainage holes.
- Grow fast- check for repotting.
- Clay better than plastic or ceramic.



Basic Requirements

- **Soil** -Well drained and porous. Crushed oyster shells.
- Mix of loam, sand, lime, peat. etc.
- **Planting** – water before. Clean container.
- Place gravel in bottom
- Loosen plant from old pot gently and place in container, fill with soil.
- Leave room on top for water.



Basic Requirements

- Watering- more that in ground. Dries out quicker.
- Water thoroughly until saturated and water runs through drainage holes. Less in winter.
- Fertilizer- More often because of water leaching.
- Weak - time release fertilizer.



Basic Requirements

- Sun- outside- at least half days sun-
- Winter -if inside south facing window.
- Artificial lights.



Basic Requirements

- Insects- outside- rare
- When bringing them in – spray with water- strong spray- insecticidal soap.
- Scale, spider mites, whitefly.
- Mealybugs- rubbing alcohol.
- Spray up to harvest but wash well!!
- Allow plenty of air circulation inside. Add extra humidity.



Propagation

- **Division**-chives, oregano, yarrow, mints
- **Stem Cuttings**-Rosemary, Oregano
- Salvia varieties, Lemon verbena
Wormwood, Scented Geraniums,
Santolina, Thyme varieties, Marjoram
French tarragon
- **Seeds**- basil, dill
- **Layering**

A Few Hints

- Plant close to house
- Plant close to water source if containers
- Plant next to walkways to rub against.



Basil

- Annual 12-36" tall sun
- Sweet,
- African Blue (not culinary)
- Cinnamon
- Mrs. Burns Lemon
- Red rubin
- Green pepper basil
- Pinch back 1/3



Bay Laurel

- *Laurus nobilis*
- Noble herb
- Garlands to adore poets.
- 25ft tall.
- Protect from winter winds.



Borage

- Borage officinalis
- Annual to 3ft.
- Star shaped blue flowers-edible.
Courage-
- Makes one merry!
- Use in place of cucumbers.



Catnip (mint)

- Perennial 3 ft tall.
Grey-green leaves-
blue flowers
- Cats love it.



Chervil

- Cold weather herb - dies back in summer
- Garnishes, salads
- Similar tasting to parsley or aniseed.



Chives

- Garlic and onion
- Flower heads are edible.
- dressings



Coriander/ Cilantro

- Cold weather herb- see it in the spring and fall- dies back in summer.
- Seeds-coriander
- Leaves cilantro-salsas



Dill

- Cold weather herb- see it in the spring and fall- dies back in summer.
- Easy to seed and spread quickly.
- Will reseed readily.



Fennel

- *Foeniculum vulgare*
- Green, bronze
- Butterfly larvae



Lavender

- Lavendins- cross between French and English better for tidewater.
- Heartier
- Dutch
- Provence
- Grosso
- Fat spike
- Seal



Lemon Balm

- Variegated and green forms
- mint family
- may need to be contained...



Lemon Verbena

- Best lemony taste
- Many uses-
- 4-5 ft tall.
- May not winter over.



Lovage

- hardy perennial
- resemble those of celery. The leaves are stronger tasting, but sweeter than celery.
- propagated from seed planted in late summer.
- leaves and stems give a celery flavor to soups and salads..



Marjoram

- *Origanum majorana*
- Same genus as oregano.
- Not as hardy.
- Milder flavor.



Marvelous Mints

- Menta species
- Peppermint
- Orange mint
- Kentucky colonel
spearmint
- Red stem Apple mint
(true *Menta gracilis*)
- Pineapple



Oregano

- Greek mountain (sp.hirtum)
- Italian oregano
- herranhausen



Parsley

- Flat leaf Italian
- Curly
- Larvae food source



Rosemary

- Rosmarinus officinalis
- Hill Hardy
- Arp
- Salem
- Mrs. Reed's dark blue
- Severn Seas
- Miss jessup
- Nancy Howard
- Tuscan blue



Sage

- *Salvia officinalis*
- Common
- Berggarten
- Purple
- Golden
- Tricolor
- Pineapple



Salad Burnett

- Perennial
- leaves taste much like cucumber.
- Can be used whole in salads or chopped into soups and other dishes.



Savory

- *Satureja* species
- Summer (annual)
- Winter (perennial)
- To 2 ft tall.
- Bold and peppery flavor



Scented Pelargoniums

- Geraniums
- Frensham's lemon
- apple
- Coconut
- Attar of roses
- Mabel grey(lemon)
- Old fashioned rose
- Peppermint
- Chocolate
- Atomic snowflake



Tarragon

- *Tagetes lucida*
Mexican mint
marigold
- Too humid for
Artemisia dracunculus
var. *sativa*
- French tarragon

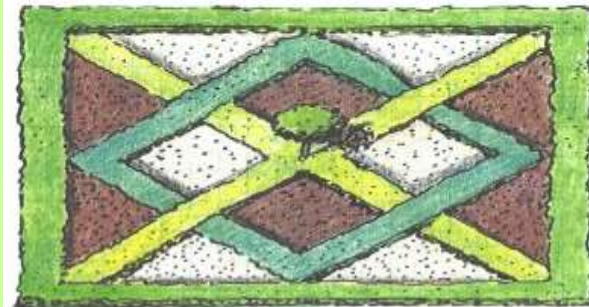
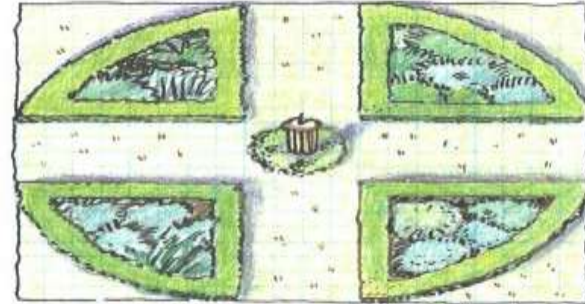
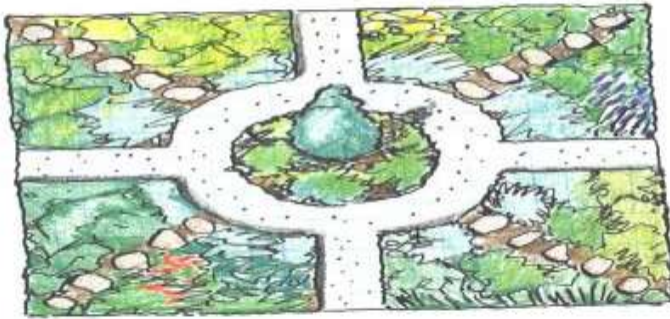
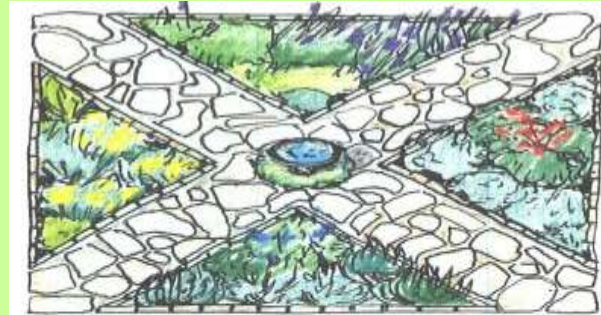
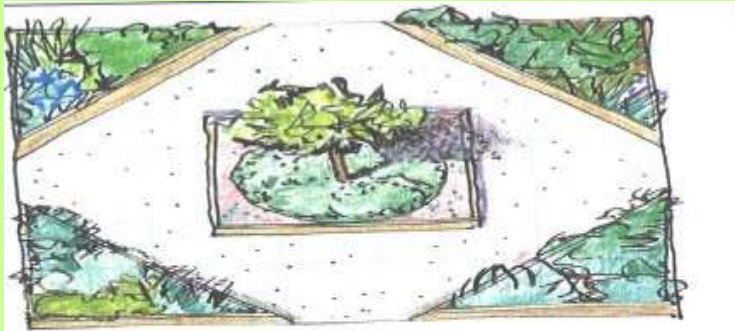


Thyme

- French
- Provençal
- Lemon (green and variegated)
- English
- Oregano
- Orange balsam
- Woolly- (not culinary)



Landscaping with Herbs



Landscaping with Herbs

- Formal layouts



Landscaping with Herbs

- formal



Landscaping with Herbs

- informal



Themes

- Kitchen/Culinary
- Fragrant
- Medicinal
- Drying
- Crafts
- Dye garden



Harvesting Herbs



- **When-** Cut on dry day- sunny morning after the dew has burned off of the leaves but before the sun gets too hot.
- Use herbs that are just starting to bud-before flowering.
- **How-** Leave most of the stem on when cutting herbs and remove tough leaves growing lower than 6 inches on the stalk.

Harvesting Herbs

- Should be from tender flavorful leaves from upper 6 inches of stalk or newer growth. Take off blossom heads.
- **Why-** These leaves have the most oil, which gives the aroma and flavor.



How to Harvest

- Use a sharp knife or scissors to cut large stems or branches from mature plants.
- Shake to remove any critters... examine leaves and remove any old, damaged, bruised or diseased leaves.
- Rinse branches (if dirty) in cold water, drain and blot dry with a paper towels or a single layer of cheesecloth.
- Turn branches upside down and remove leaves along stem or dry then remove stem.



Harvesting Herbs

- Herbs grown for foliage- harvest before they flower.
- Seeds-as seed pods change in color from green to brown to gray- before they shatter.
- Roots- in the fall after foliage fades-
- Examples- Chicory, ginseng and goldenseal.



Harvesting Herbs

- Annuals can be harvested until frost.
- Perennial herbs until late August.
- Harvest tarragon or lavender flowers in early summer then shear to half its height for second blooming in fall.



Different Methods of Drying

- Air-dried. Easiest and most inexpensive.
- Herbs are tied in bunches (5-6 stems) with string or with elastics and hung upside down in a well ventilated, dust free place to dry.
- Keep out of the sun.



Air Drying Herbs

- Place in dry SHADY place until the leaves are so dry that they crumble when handled.
- Herbs dried in the shade have better color and flavor than sun dried herbs.
- Sun will bleach color, smell and flavor from the herbs.



Air Drying Herbs

- Check weekly –should be brittle enough to break between fingers.
- Check after one week, then weekly....
- Herbs suited for air drying- sturdy- sage, thyme, summer savory, dill, bay leaves, oregano, rosemary, parsley and marjoram.



Drying Racks

- Trays or shelves to lay herbs out flat..
- Spread stems out and turn daily to allow to dry properly.
- Can use screens, between sheets of newspaper or muslin.
- Keep out of direct sunlight.
- Herbs to shelf dry (higher moisture content)-basil, tarragon, lemon balm,
- mints – mold if not dried quickly...



Different Methods of Drying

- **Dehydrators**- useful if drying large quantities of herbs or high moisture herbs such as basil.
- Follow directions with dehydrator.
- **Microwave Ovens** -last resort!!!
- Can dry small batches.
- Place 4 or 5 herbs stalks with leaves between paper towels.
- Microwave on high for 1 minute.
- Check herbs for dryness.
- Repeat if needed.
- Cook herbs- not much oils left...



Oven Drying

- Works better for some herbs in areas with high humidity.
- Place on cookie sheet without allowing leaves to touch and place in a warm oven until herbs are light and brittle.
- Ideal oven temperatures -110 degree-130 degrees.



Drying Roots

- Some need to be peeled first.
- Examples- Licorice, horseradish and marshmallow root.
- Dandelion and angelica need skin on.
- Cut roots into ½ inch slices and lay in racks or screens.
- Takes much longer to dry out- 5-6 weeks.
- Check often.
- When slices are light and brittle - ready for storage.
- Place in airtight tin or glass jars.



Drying Lavender

- Pick flower heads when closed and the top florets have just burst.
- Contains the highest concentration of oils.
- Spread the complete head on a tray to dry. Turn head often to make sure all parts are dry.
- Or bunch and hang upside down.
- Strip the separate flower heads from the stems – dry to use for pot-pourri.



Freezing Herbs

- Can be place inside a small freezer bag or airtight container (canning jar) in the freezer. When ready- crumble into recipes.
- Spread out on cookie sheets or jelly roll pan. When frozen- pack in air tight containers.
- Place fresh herbs in water in ice cube trays and freeze them.



Freezing Herbs

- Will lose some flavor but ready to use.
- Pop in soups, stews and sauces.
- Not suitable for garnishing- becomes limp when thawed...do not refreeze herbs.
- Chives- great for freezing. Parsley, sage, tarragon.



Storing Dried Herbs

- Dry when brittle and crumb easily.
- Store in small airtight containers away from the light.
- Plastic bags or jars.
- Label and date each container.
- Store in cool, dry, dark place.



Storing Dried Herbs

- Can keep for 3-4 years but best if used within a year.
- Flavor diminishes with age.
- To release full flavor- crush whole herb leaves just before adding to recipe.
- Add to soups and stews the last half hour of cooking.



Enjoy your Herbs!

- Go out and plant grow, harvest enjoy your herbs!
- Any Questions????
- Thank- You!



Resources

- <http://www.herbsociety.org/>
- Michigan State University Extension
- <http://www.herbsociety.co.uk>
- http://solutions.psu.edu/Food_Preparation_Safety_Storage.htm
- Web.extension.uiuc.edu
- www.ces.ncsu.edu
- <http://hgic.clemson.edu>
- <http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu>
- www.extension.umn.edu